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Home-School Collaborations are Key for Wellness during COVID-19

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This opinion paper briefly looks at addressing needs of school-age children due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) through positive home-school collaborations that would benefit both students and adults as they work together for wellness.

Keywords: Coronavirus Disease 2019, COVID-19, Home-school collaboration, Wellness

Introduction

Schools face new challenges in addressing the needs of students at risk of falling behind academically and experiencing stress-related difficulties due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The United States is battling increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases. Pathek, EB, et al. [1] predicted, “for every child admitted to PICU, there are approximately 2,381 infected children in the community, whether they have symptoms or not, they can transmit the infection to others who may be vulnerable (p.5).” Furthermore, “in April, there were 74 severely infected COVID-19 PICU admissions in 19 states; given the above analysis, this would have reflected 176,194 infected children” [1]. On July 18, according to the VPS (<https://covid19.myvps.org/>), there were 992 PICU admissions reflecting a 500% increase; by the evidence-based analysis, the current estimate would equal 2,361,952 pediatric cases and schools had not yet opened [2]. The relevance of this is that, given there are 74 million children in the U.S., projected severe pediatric cases could overextend the limited number of PICUs available in the nation.

By June, with many states reopening in phases, there have been reports of increasing infections [3,4]. School officials have been in a quandary about opening schools in the fall and state governors have taken different approaches in reacting to the pandemic in relationship to the education of their young people. While utilizing current federal and state health regulations, possible behavioral changes related to creating emotionally- and physically safe environments are currently being explored. It is important for schools to teach students health-related hygiene and cleaning practices for illness prevention, in addition to minimizing potential academic and relationship difficulties [5].

Opportunities for Collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the collaboration between school staff (i.e. school administrators, classroom teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, and social workers) is more crucial than ever. School personnel and facilities management workers can be educated about hygiene practices useful inside and outside of classrooms. Since schools can provide a

setting for the transmission of respiratory infections due to having many individuals in a limited space for prolonged periods of time, learning health habits such as covering mouth and nose during coughing or sneezing, appropriately disposing of used tissues, and immediately performing hand-hygiene are recommended [6]. Current understandings about germs and their transmission, the prevention of transmission, and usual hygiene practices can be addressed in ongoing educational trainings for employees as school boards and states come to an agreement as to what they consider necessary in their areas of the country. Support for students will likely be implemented. Appropriate interventions such as mandatory wearing of facial masks, social distancing of approximately six feet, and handwashing throughout the day will be recommended in many schools as they open for the academic year beginning in Fall 2020.

It is important to keep in mind that students learn by observation and understanding cause and effect. Because children mimic the actions of positive role models, teachers can instruct and practice with their pupils the procedures necessary for illness-prevention. Staniford & Schmidtke [7] determined environmental-disinfection and hand-hygiene interventions can be learned in school settings and students can carry lessons about hygiene from school back to their homes to influence family behavior.

Therefore, young people will be equipped to demonstrate to their parents the wellness routines learned at school that can be done in their homes.

Enacting transferable health habits for students from school to home provides a symbiotic opportunity for ensuring best COVID-19-prevention practices which can be appropriately followed both

at home and at school. This will encourage positive home-school collaborations for benefiting both children and adults as they work together for wellness.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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